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Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Announces Access Changes at Pungo Unit

Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Manager Howard Phillips announced today changes in public access to the Pungo Unit of the refuge. "We need visitors to pay special attention to the map printed in the refuge hunt leaflet and look for 'area closed' signs," he said. "We make every effort to make it clear to the public what areas are open and what areas are closed, but it's still prudent to check in with the refuge office, if you're not certain." Several roads have been closed temporarily for resource management purposes. Allen Road has been opened for public access.

Phillips explained, "Managing a national wildlife refuge requires a lot of balancing. On refuges, we always put wildlife first. We understand the need for wildlife, especially migratory birds, to have undisturbed places to feed and loaf. On the other hand, we understand the importance of allowing our public access to those wildlife resources. So, we have to make decisions about how much access is too much. And, we have to base those decisions on good science."

From now until late February, several roads closures have been affected. Molt Road and most of South Lake Drive are closed to all entry. South Lake Drive is closed from Hyde Park Road (just west of Observation Tower) west to West Lake Drive. Molt Road, located at the south end of the Smartweed Moist Soil Unit, remains closed, as it has been in years past. West Lake Road from D Canal to Molt Road remains open and provides excellent opportunities to view waterfowl as they fly back and forth from the lake to feeding areas in other locations.

Hyde Park Road is closed from South Pungo Road south to Coulbourn Road.

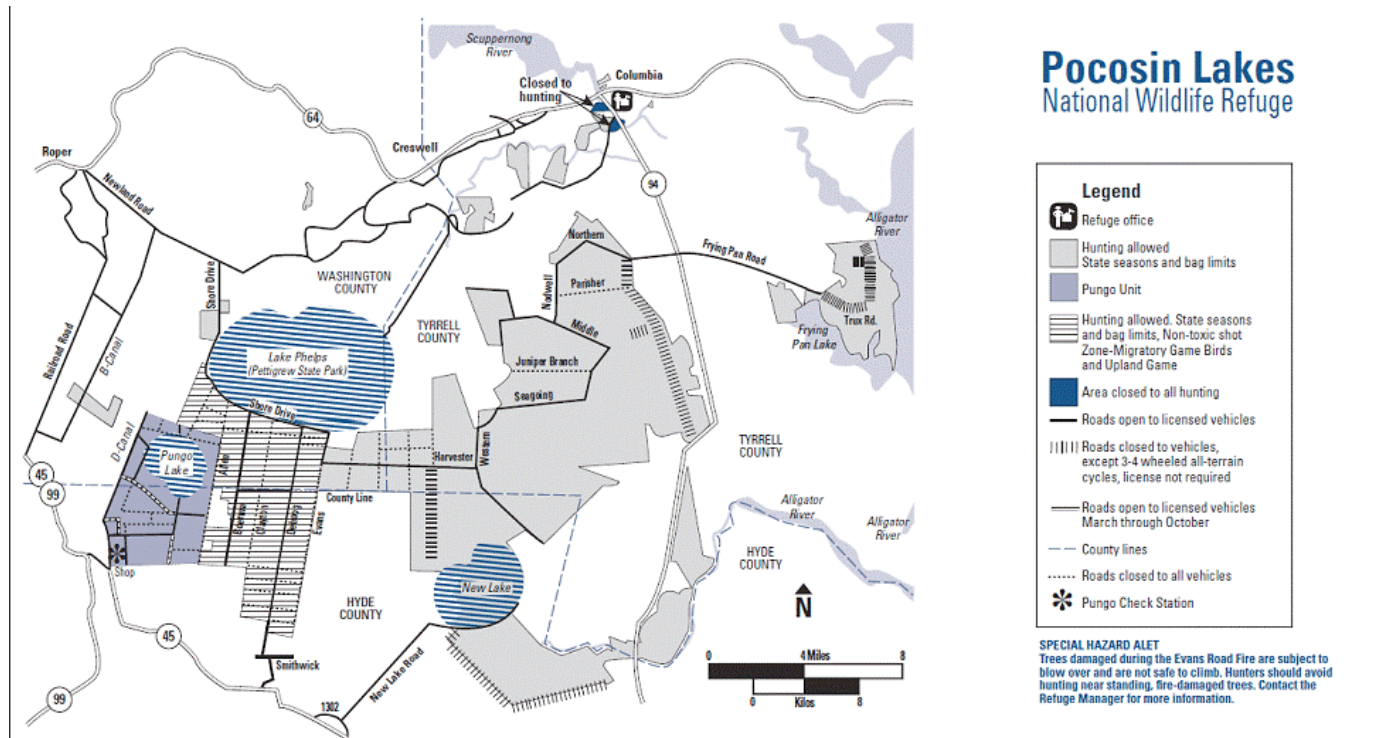
North Lake Road is closed to all entry, except on Saturday and Sunday mornings from dawn to noon. During those hours, the public is invited to walk or bike on North Lake Road and enjoy the wildlife and wildland resources of the refuge. This is an excellent location for wildlife observation and photography.

Allen Road is open from Shore Drive to Coulbourn Road.

Phillips added, "Plans are underway to provide some additional access points for wildlife observation and photography. We've requested funding for a boardwalk and observation tower that would provide viewing access to the large numbers of waterfowl that winter on

Pocosin Lakes. It would be great to be able to offer a way for the public to see these birds. It's a spectacular event. But, as with any balancing act, we have to be sure the birds won't suffer as a result."

See attached map for locations of road closures. For additional information, visit www.fws.gov/pocosinlakes or call the refuge office at 252-796-3004.



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